

WAR GAMES

Times

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Mr. R. J. K.

WAR GAMES FOR CHILDREN.

Times, January 7th, 1902.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—In his poem published in *The Times*, Mr. Rudyard Kipling has struck a note which every true Briton hopes will echo, not only through the old country, but through her colonies. There can be little doubt that the British public takes much more interest in the result of a match at football or cricket than of an important engagement in South Africa. As Mr. Rudyard Kipling has most admirably put it, this is a deplorable state of matters, and must be corrected if Britain is to maintain her position. The first step towards correcting it is to find out why it occurs; and I think the reason is not far to seek. Every man and boy in the country knows what cricket and football are, either from having played themselves or having had friends who played these games. And I think it is partly because human beings often take more interest in their play than in their work that these games excite so much interest, all the greater perhaps because they awaken in many men pleasant remembrances of their boyhood. Do not let us try to extinguish an interest in these games, which are so useful in developing a keen eye, swift foot, and skilful arm, but let us try to divert it in part to other games which may serve a more practical purpose. Let the childish games "I spy," "French and English," and "Prisoner's Base," which are old war games of scouting, capture, and recapture, be adapted to the necessities of modern warfare, and let all children be taught at school, partly in play and partly as work, how to handle a gun, how to shoot, and how to manœuvre. In this way all boys at the age of fourteen would be sufficiently trained to defend the country in case of invasion, and we should possess a sufficient army without recourse to conscription. The war games thus learned in childhood and boyhood would share the public interest in right proportion with cricket and football, so that the country would then be free from the reproach which Mr. Rudyard Kipling has justly brought against it. L. B.





